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Lecture Outline

MARXISM

I. Introduction

- A. The reasons for our interest in Communism are
 - 1. Communism, as embodied in the Soviet Union, constitutes the chief contemporary threat to US security.
 - 2. In order to defeat Communism, we shall have sometimes to deal with people who do not recognize it for what it is. In order to discuss it intelligently with them, we have to familiarize ourselves systematically with the substance and terminology of Marxism.

II. The Philosophical Basis of Marxism

- A. Marxism consists of a philosophy, an economic theory, and a political theory.
- B. The philosophy is basic to the economic and political theory. It consists of three elements: a metaphysical position, a philosophical method, and a philosophy of history.
 - 1. The metaphysical position of Marxism is Materialism, which holds that
 - a. Matter is the ultimate reality.
 - b. Matter exists before and independently of mind, and apart from our perception to it.
 - 2. The philosophical method of Marxism is the dialectic, which holds that nature and history have developed through a clash of opposing elements. In conjunction with materialism, this yields dialectical materialism, which holds that the dialectical clash has occurred in purely material terms. And the dialectic operates in a certain predetermined manner, described by the so-called Laws of the Dialectic:
 - a. The Law of the Unity of Opposites.
 - b. The Law of the Transfer of Quantity into Quality
 - c. The Law of the Negation of the Negation.
 - 3. The philosophy of history developed by Marxism is an extension in detail of dialectical materialism into human history. History has developed by a process of conflict of physical forces. The ultimate physical force in human life is economic production, which then underlies all other human activities. This means that:
 - a. A change in the productive forces means a change in the productive relations between human beings.
 - b. A change in the productive relations means a change in all other social relations.
 - c. Since primitive times the production relations have always been relations of exploitation: Society has been divided into two major groups, consisting of owners and non-owners of the means of production. The conflict between these groups constitutes the dialectic of human history.
 - d. This is the theory of the class struggle.

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III. The Economic Theory of Marxism

- A. If the basic human activity is economic production, a study of the economic structure of contemporary society is called for.
- B. Marx's economic theory is based upon the doctrine of the class struggle, and is essentially a critique of nineteenth-century Capitalism in an effort to discover the method of capitalist exploitation.
 - 1. In his effort to do this, he incorporated into his thinking elements of Riccardo's Labor Theory of Value, which held that the irreducible measure of value in a commodity was the amount of labor embodied in it.
 - 2. Labor Power is equivalent to the average number of labor hours necessary to support life. This value is represented to the laborer by the amount of value which he receives as wages.
 - 3. What then is the source of profit to the employer? He must be depriving the laborer of some of the value he creates; this value can only be created by hours of labor; therefore the laborer must be working more hours than are necessary to support life, in order to create a margin of profit for his employer. This is Surplus Value.
- C. The Development of Capitalism
 - 1. The desire of the capitalist is constantly to increase his margin of profit.
 - 2. He can do this by making his workers work longer hours; but this has obvious limitations. Or he can do it by increasing their efficiency through machinery.
 - 3. But more and better machinery means fewer laborers are necessary; consequent competition for jobs, thus lower wages and decreased purchasing power in society, tending toward economic disorder.
 - 4. On the other hand, competition will wipe out most enterprisers, and those remaining will combine in trusts, cartels, monopolies of various kinds.
 - 5. Thus the poor will get poorer and more numerous, and the rich fewer and richer.
 - 6. Capitalism will collapse, after recurring crises.

IV. The Political Theory of Marxism

- A. The Communist theory of the state, like their theory of economics, is based upon the doctrine of the Class Struggle.
 - 1. The state is the machinery used by the dominant class to exploit the propertiless.
 - 2. It is the very function of the state to resist change.
 - 3. The modern state has produced bourgeois democracy as the machinery of exploitation.
 - 4. But the economic contradictions inherent in Capitalism will precipitate a revolutionary change in spite of the state.
 - 5. After the revolution, there will be no state because there will be no classes.
 - 6. Immediately after the revolution however, the remnants of bourgeois society will have to be suppressed; this will necessitate a proletarian state for a time. This is to be the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

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V. Leninism and Stalinism

A. Lenin's chief contributions to Marxism were:

1. The concept of a limited, disciplined party of professional revolutionaries.
2. The idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat not as a democratic regime, but as a minority dictatorship.
3. The theory of the Imperialist Stage of Capitalism, in which competition (war) will proceed among capitalist states, rather than among single companies and corporations.

B. Stalin's additions have been the prolongation of the state because of what he called Capitalist encirclement; and the idea of socialist construction in one country.

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